

## **The Role of Education in the Achievement of Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examined the concept of The role of education in the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. It defined the concept of education and discussed the various systems of education which include: Traditional, Non Formal, Formal, and Informal education. Furthermore, it explains in details the conceptualization of sustainable development. It also delves into the concept of development, components of development, and the characteristics of development in a society and also the roles education will play in national development. Education should help the citizens to avoid waste of material and also turn agricultural waste into opportunities for job creation by means of recycling. Education should help people to have critical and reflective thinking of the past, consider the present and contemplate the future. Education for sustainable development should equip the populace with skills of peace and conflict resolution and respect for others. Education for sustainable development is meant to improve the economic sector and achieve economic growth in term of gross domestic products (GDP) per capital income. Education and sustainable development should also address issues such as insecurity and unemployment, create an enabling environment for business to prosper. The paper concluded by suggesting as the way forward that education should be given a priority by the Nigeria government, and that education should focus on human development and not infrastructural development.

**Keywords:** Education, Development, and Sustainable development.

### **Introduction**

Education has been identified as a means of improving societal members. From the sociological perspective, it is a means through which society uses to impart or transmit its moral values, beliefs and norms to the young. It has been observed that the kind of education that the Nigerian schools transmit to the younger generation is not meeting the need of the society. It is out of date, absolute and irrelevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century demand. In some states in Nigeria, there is infrastructural development but the lives of the populace is not affected in a positively due to poor healthcare, high mortality rate, housing and employment problem etc. Federal and state governments have been obtaining loans from the world Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) this has resulted in the devaluation of naira currency.

Included also is the flag up, commissioning and abandonment of many projects from previous administrations, and execution of some irrelevant project etc.

This topic is timely and important for our society, the institutions of education, development and progress. Obviously, it should be highly appreciated, that there can be no sustainable development in Nigeria without the educational institutions. Therefore, there is a cross reference of these two phrases in this discussion. The study adopted the descriptive survey design as the research methodology. This paper seeks to awake the curiosity of members of the public, the media and others on the various roles that education will play for sustainable national development. The study will go a long way on identifying the characteristics of developed nations. It will also bring to limelight solutions on how government, non-governmental actors and the communities can help to improve the administration of quality education in Nigeria. It will also give opportunity for all to embrace the realities of education as the hope for humanity for relevance of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigeria. Therefore, what is education, sustainability, development and education for sustainable development? It will enrich our knowledge to define and explain those key terms associated with this paper.

### **The Conceptualization of Education**

The term education, do not have one for all definition. Scholars and practitioners of education have tried to define it from personal experience and research. For the purpose of this paper, let us consider some. Education is simply one aspect of socialization: it involves the acquisition of knowledge and the learning of skills. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, education also helps to shape beliefs and moral values, (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013, p. 663).

This definition in the broad sense, sees education as a process of socialization which begins at birth and ends at death. It is a not a project which has a beginning and ends on the day of its completion. Education is a continuous process. Neoliberalism views education as the key to success in an increasingly competitive global market. It provides the skills needed to compete and the scientific knowledge and new technology to stay in the race. These beliefs have become universal; they are an educational gospel' an article of faith which states that economic growth will lead to social and individual salvation, (Grubb and Lazerson 2006, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). Education is a process of inculcating and developing of an individual intellectual abilities which helps him to adopt and modify his experiences to meet the needs of the society in a changing world. Education is a tool that shapes an individual in a society and also an instrument for social change. Fafunwa (1974, as cited in Nzeneri, 1996, p.4) sees education as “ a combination of physical training with character building, and manual activities with intellectual training”. Interestingly, Fafunwa is not the only scholar who thinks along this line. In the light of the above, Peters (1966, as cited in Osaat, 2010, p. 22) pointed out the following three criteria for education:

1. Education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it,
2. Education atleast rules out some procedures of transmission on the grounds that they lack willingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner.

3. Education must involve knowledge, understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inert”.

In the same vein, Aminigo and Nwaokugha (2007, p. 17,18) opined that education borders on three major areas such as:

1. Meeting society’s needs
2. Being the means through which the young and old could be changed.
3. Being the means through which needed social change could be introduced”.

Based on the above perspectives, education is focused on the development of man as a living person. Nwangu (1976, as cited in Nwanna- Nzewunwa (2017) observe:

Education is the process by which every society attempts to preserves and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitude in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well-being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable, at times of hostile and destructive element and forces of man and nature, thus, irrespective of the society, education exhibit some permanent attributes and characteristics and has the growing quality of a living organism. (p. 31).

This definition best sooth the theme of our discussion, due to the fact that it see education as a tool or instrument that footer continuously the well-being of mankind, in other words, it is a tool for sustainable development of man.

### **Systems of Education**

The following are the systems of education, or various ways through which education can be imparted or transmitted:

1. Traditional education
2. Informal education
3. Formal education
4. Non-formal education

### **Traditional System of Education**

This is generally regarded at the indigenous education, due to the fact that it is not formal in nature, it is the kind of education that takes place in places such as:

1. Home
2. Church
3. Market
4. River
5. Farm
6. Village square
7. Road side etc.

### **Informal Education**

Just like the tradition education, informal system of education is not organized in formalistic settings. The education can be transmitted through:

1. Looking or observing
2. Imitation
3. Apprenticeship and others

The influences are: Family members, uncles and Aunties, friends etc.

### **Formal Education**

Just like the term formal, it is the kind of education that is well organized in a formalist setting perhaps in an institution's site, with a planned curriculum, continuous assessment and evaluation.

### **Non-Formal Education**

This refers to organized learning, in many cases on the job, but outside organized institutional settings. The arrangement is aimed at meeting specific learning need of particular groups of children, youths or adults in the community, (Aminigo and Nwaokugha, 2007, p. 19). It is also known as nomadic education. It is designed to educate children of the fishers men, herders and farmer with required skills and training to be more productive.

### **The Goals of Nigerian Education**

The national policy on education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section (1) paragraph (6) states the following as goals of Nigerian education:

1. Development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen;
2. Total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world;
3. Provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;
4. Inculcation of national consciousness values and national unity; and
5. Development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development means something that can last. This is the focus on political, economic, social and environmental performance of an individual to the present and future generation.

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary International Students Edition (2010), it defines sustainable as what can continue or be continued for a time: sustainable economic growth.

From these assertions, sustainability is that which can last from generation to generation.

The United Nations Brundtland Commission (1987) defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In the words of Itari and Ugbe (2018), sustainability is the ability to sustain, maintain, provide for or nourish something for an indefinite period without damaging or depleting it.

### **Component of Sustainable Development**

These includes:

- i. Economy
- ii. Human
- iii. Social
- iv. Environment etc.

### **Development**

This is the “process of getting the correct environment and putting health of people into such environment, and exposing them to situations of manner that full realization and fruition is realized” (Abgurug and Amini 2017, p 81).

In another perspective, Adedeji (1995, as cited in Nwaorgu, 2006) write:

Development is not merely a transformation of the structures and material attributes of a society. Development is human experience synonymous with the fulfilment of individual, mental, emotional, and physical well-being and not just the growth of things which are merely means, ( p. 76).

Authentic, self reliant process of development inevitably result in the transformation of the people who bring about the change, their culture, their attitudes to work, their saving and investment habits, their concepts and skills and their social system. Itari (1995, as cited in Itari, 2018) defines development as growth in people’s life. It could also mean a change or an increase in the structural facilities of a people, community or society. In the light of this, Arvind and Everett (1989, as cited in Ibodje, 2009, p. 841) sees “development as a widely participatory process of directed social change in society intended to bring about both social and material advancement, including greater freedom, equality and other valued qualities for the majority of people through their gaining greater control over their environment”. In the view of Dudley (1963), development is when a country has low poverty rate unemployment and inequality. In contribution to the above, Owen (1987) posits that development means development of people and not development of things.

From the above assertions, development is centered on man. The improvement of all the institutions of the society which includes, the political system, family health, religion economy and education, which is our focus in this discuss. If a nation experiences economic growth in GDP and has infrastructural development, but it is not affecting the lives of the population positively, what is the real essence? In the view of D. Seers, if the answers to the three questions such as:

What is happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? has been brought to bearest minimum ratio, then the country is developed (Seers, 1963).

### **Characteristics Of Developed Nation**

1. Economic growth in terms of gross domestic product (G.D.P)
2. Advancement in technology
3. Military might endowment

4. Political stability
5. Low morality rate
6. Birth control
7. Low unemployment rate
8. Low poverty rate etc.

Nwaorgu (2006) extend the list to include:

1. Food security
2. Self sufficiency
3. Environment control
4. Poverty alleviation etc

### **The Eight Millennium Development Goals**

Following the summit held on 6-8<sup>th</sup> September, 2000 at New York, the United Nations in 2015 adopted the goals which includes as follows:

- a) **Hunger:** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- b) **Education:** Achieve universal primary education
- c) **Gender:** Promote gender equality and women empowerment
- d) **Children:** Reduce child mortality
- e) **Mothers:** Improve maternal health
- f) **Disease:** Combat HIV/AIDS, material and other diseases
- g) **Environment:** Ensure environment sustainability
- h) **Partnership:** Develop a global partnership for development.

From the above goals, any name nation that meet these goals is said to be developed.

### **Education and Sustainable Development**

Education and sustainable development is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. Education for sustainable development empowers learners with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to take informed decisions and make responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, (UNESCO 2006).

Okiridu, Azuma and Godpower (2017, p.152) views education for sustainable development as the ‘projection of education that seeks to equip people towards creating sustainable future’.

### **Sustainable Economic Development**

The process by which a country or nation improves the economic, and social well-being of its population in terms of GDP. In the view of Wosu, Ikpe, Owonda and Eyone (2018), economic sustainable development involves the financial strength and productive engagement of the people, organization or nation.

### **Education Promote Economic Growth**

Lauder et al (2006, as cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2013) argues that education has a major role to play in the economic growth of a society when they write:

Many sociologists and all government see more education for more people as vital for economic in an increasingly competitive global economy. As competition intensifies, growth is seen to be increasingly dependent on the development of scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and more highly skilled workforce. And education is seen as crucial for these developments” ( p. 675).

In the opinion of Woolf (2002, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2013), he observe that high education does not necessary lead to high economic growth with respect to the economy of a nation. On a comparative analysis of so many economies, she notes:

That among the most successful economies, there is infact no clear link between growth and spending on education. In Switzerland, for example, expenditure on education is relatively low, but in terms of per-capital income. Switzerland is one of the richest countries in the world. Among less developed countries, Egypt massively expanded its education spending between 1980 and 1995, but failed to improve its economic position relative to other countries” (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013, p. 675).

Furthermore, Haralambos & Holborn (2013) argued:

Woolf does not believe that all education expenditure is wasted. As well as acknowledging the importance of high quality primary and secondary education, she believes it is important to provide first rate facilities for first rate students’. She believes that trying to educate a larger proportion of the population to degree level limits spending on the most able, who could contribute most to economic growth, for example, pioneering research” (p. 675).

### **Environmental Sustainable Development**

This entails improvement and safeguarding human life by protecting the environment such as: land water from pollution, air etc. Any education or training, perhaps entrepreneurship or technical and vocational or business education that is aimed at providing the necessary skills or knowledge to the population that will enable them to find solution to their present and future needs, can be regarded as education for sustainable development.

### **Role of Education In Sustainable Development**

Social democrats perspective, explains education as follows:

Education is a crucial type of investment for the exploitation of modern technology. In advanced industrial societies it is inevitable that the education system should come into a closer relationship with the economy as the proportion of the labour force engaged in manual work declines and the demand for white- collar, professional and managerial workers rises. (Halsey et al 1960, as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2013, p.1,2).



Therefore, the role of education for sustainable development can be summarized as follows:

1. Education should provide people with relevant skills and knowledge to solve their present and future needs.
2. Education should help people to have critical and reflective thinking of the past, consider the present and contemplate the future.
3. Education for sustainable development should equip the population with skills of peace and conflict resolution and respect for others.
4. Education for sustainable development is meant to improve the economic sector and achieve economic growth in term of GDP per capital income.
5. Education for sustainable development should address issues of insecurities, creating an enabling environment for business to thrive.
6. Healthcare management will be improved.
7. Infant mortality rate and birth control is another important feature of education and sustainable development.
8. Access to equality of educational opportunities.
9. It promotes human right and respect for rule of law.
10. It is designed to carry the members of the population along in the decision and policies of government, create awareness through programs, talks, news on the need for every member to contribute their part to the community and national development.

In a nutshell, education should help the citizens to avoid waste of material and also turn agricultural waste into opportunities for job creation by means of recycling.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

This paper has examined the concept of education and sustainable development in Nigeria. It delved into the concept of education, sustainable development, development and the role of education in sustainable development. It defined education and sustainable development as any education in the form of training, perhaps entrepreneurship, technical and vocational or business education that is geared at providing the necessary skill or knowledge to the population that will enable them to solve their immediate problems and future needs. The paper furthermore asserted that development should be centered on man and not only infrastructures, but on economic growth in terms of GDP, per capital income. The paper therefore suggest that education should be made a priority by the government, and that the focus and goals of Nigerian education should be on human development through business education, entrepreneurship development, technical and vocational education and skill acquisition as this will boost economic growth through tax generation and create employment opportunities for the populace.

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